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VA Modernization Initiative Reduces Processing Time for Veterans' Claims, Saves Future Taxpayer Dollars

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently started digitizing older, inactive paper records, which will save taxpayer dollars through reduced, leased office-space that currently houses these records.

“This is just one of the ways in which we are modernizing our capabilities, not only to be more responsive to Veterans and their families, but also to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars,” said VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy.

This new “paper-extraction” process ensures that when a claim is filed, the Veteran’s electronic record is already available in VA’s computer systems, reducing processing time for benefit claims from Veterans and their survivors. In the past, when a Veteran filed a new or supplemental claim, if a medical condition had worsened, the retired paper files were boxed and shipped to a central site to scan into VA’s systems before work would begin on the new claim.

Nearly 2 million inactive files were housed in 33 regional offices across the country before the change. As of April 14, more than 500,000 files have been collected from eight regional offices for scanning. Once the records have been digitized, VA will archive and store them in less expensive long-term storage for safekeeping.

The agency plans to remove and scan paper claim records from the remaining regional offices by the end of 2018.

“This modernization initiative seeks to eliminate delays caused by shipping and digital conversion,” said Bradley Houston, director of VA’s Office of Business Process Integration, which oversees the initiative. “It will give claims processors nationwide the ability to instantly access millions of inactive claim records when needed.”

Over the past five years, VA has made concerted efforts to modernize the way it processes compensation and pension claims. Since 2012, 397 million records — consisting of 2.6 billion images — have been scanned, indexed and uploaded into the agency’s electronic-claims processing system, Veterans Benefits Management System. In fiscal 2016, VA provided compensation and pension benefits to more than 5.1 million Veterans and family members, totaling over \$80 billion.

For more information about VA’s benefits, go to <http://benefits.va.gov/benefits/> or call 800-827-1000.

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